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AVRUPA KOMŞULUK POLİTİKASI: MISIR, ÜRDÜN, LIBYA, FİLİSTİN VE TUNUS ÖRNEĞİ
“EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY: THE CASE OF EGYPT, JORDAN, LEBANON, OCCUPIED PALESTINE AND TUNISIA”

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Öz

Bu makale, Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası (European Neighbourhood Policy; ENP) yörüngesinde bulunan güney devletlerinden beşi ile (Orta Doğu Kuzey Afrika Bölgesi'nde) Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası'nı inceleme, analiz ve değerlendirmesini yapmaktadır: Mısır, Ürdün, Lübnan, Filistin ve Tunus. Bu beş devlet müşterek olarak bir Arap kimliği ve Avrupa - Akdeniz Ortaklığı (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; EMP) ile gelişen bir AB ilişkileri tarihini paylaşmaktadır ve bu devletler dört yıl önce (bazı durumlar için daha fazla) ENP'nin çift yönlü stratejisinin bir parçası olarak resmi bir Eylem Planı üzerinde anlaşmaya varmışlardır. Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası'na genel bir bakış ve önceki bölgesel politikaların özetinin ardından bu beş ülkede günümüze kadar uygulanan Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Komşuluk Politikaları, Ortadoğu-Güney Afrika.

Abstract

This paper provides a review, analysis and assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with five of the southern states (in the Middle East North African region) included in the ENP orbit: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Occupied Palestine and Tunisia. These five states share in common an Arab identity, a history of EU relations through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), and the fact that at least four years have passed (in most cases, more) since they agreed to a formal Action Plan as part of the ENP bilateral strategy. Following an overview of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and a summary of previous regional policies, the ENP as it has applied to date to each of these five states is discussed.

Keywords: European Union, Neighbourhood Policy, Middle East-North Africa, ENP

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Introduction

Conceived in 2002-2003 in anticipation of impending enlargement and remaining under development since 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) provides a framework for the EU's external relations with sixteen neighbours to the South and the East surrounding the EU's new ('post big-bang' enlargement) borders. The ENP framework extends to Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine (the European Commission 2011b, p. 1). The countries to the East and the Southeast are for the most part former Soviet republics or satellites and have only recently (as a result of eastern enlargement) emerged as contiguous EU neighbours. The eastern countries are also relatively new to EU relations. Most of the neighbours to the south, on the other hand, have engaged with the EU on trade, development, and economic matters for many years under the aegis of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), also known as the Barcelona Process (Pace 2007; Kausch & Youngs 2009).

This paper provides a review, analysis and assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with five of the southern states (in the Middle East North African region) included in the ENP orbit: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Occupied Palestine and Tunisia. All five of these states have agreed to a formal Action Plan as part of the ENP bilateral strategy; other ENP states, including Libya, Algeria, and Syria, have not. All five states also formed part of the Euro-Med Partnership (EMP) and its successor, the Union for the Mediterranean (UMed), and as such, all five states have long-established relations with the EU. Another reason for the selection of these particular five states (or rather, four states and one Occupied Territory) is that they are all Arab states and have a certain commonality of interests related to this fact. Following an overview of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and a summary of predecessor regional policies, the ENP as it has applied to date to each of these five states is discussed.

Overview of the European Neighbourhood Policy

The ENP is, according to the European Commission, at its heart a bilateral policy between the EU and each partner country, supplemented with regional and bilateral cooperation initiatives. The central principles of the European Neighbourhood Policy were outlined by then EC President Romano Prodi in 2002. Prodi said the objective of the new 'proximity policy' was to offer the EU's neighbours "incentives, inject a new dynamic into existing processes and developing an open and evolving partnership" through a policy "based on mutual benefits and obligations" (cited in Zaiotti 2007, p. 146). Such incentives included increased access to the EU Common Market as well as further liberalization and integration to promote free movement of goods, capital and persons, along with development aid. The incentives would stop short of actual membership of the EU, however. As Prodi famously said, the ENP partners would be offered "everything but institutions" (Scott & Likanen 2010). While the bilateral relationships of the ENP stop well short of actual membership and although the partner countries have no direct involvement or input into EU institutions, the underlying organizational structure of the ENP framework shares many similarities with the framework imposed on prospective member states: the relationship is government by an initial agreement, an "action plan" is developed, regular "progress reports" are made, and the partner's continued and/or expanded access to EU-based benefits are subject to a broad range of conditions (European Commission 2011b; Bengtsson 2008; Casier 2011; Agh 2010).

From the EU's perspective, the ENP can be seen to serve a number of functions and purposes. These include promoting regional democracy, enhancing regional economic and political stability, addressing problematic immigration, improving security, managing conflict, and efficiently addressing interdependencies related to energy, labour and education (Bengtsson 2008; Haukkala 2008; Barbe and Johansson-Nogues 2008; Ganzle 2009). The EU has an obvious incentive

to improve the political, economic and social stability of its ENP partners: doing so enhances the stability and security of EU member states. As Haukkala (2008, p. 1611) notes, the ENP can be seen as having a dual function: "on the one hand it is an attempt to devise an alternative to further enlargements of the Union. On the other hand, it is an attempt at (re)injecting the Union's normative agenda and the application of conditionality more strongly into relations with non-candidate countries." As Dr. Tom Casier (2011, p. 37), a Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Kent has noted, "Rather than extending its integration model to new members, the ENP seeks to create stability by exporting the EU model to its neighbours. The purpose is to create privileged relations, without putting membership on the table." The ENP will in theory allow the EU to stay clear of the obligations of further enlargement, while at the same time providing a mechanism for managing difficult, post-enlargement borders (Johansson-Nogues 2004). A number of analysts cite the absence of institutions as a central problem in the ENP (Bengtsson 2008; Scott & Likanen 2010; Ganzle 2009). Agh (2010) and others have also questioned whether or not there are sufficient incentives for ENP partners to adhere to the EU's conditionality without the possibility of EU membership. While the Commission has framed the ENP as a bilateral policy involving partnerships, association agreements and a broad range of mutually-beneficial arrangements, it is difficult to escape its fundamentally asymmetrical structure. The EU is clearly the 'superior' in the relationship, attempting to spread its values and its political/social/economic structures as well as to impose conditionality on any direct benefits or assistance it confers to its 'inferior' partners. As Haukkala (2008, p. 1612) has observed, "unlike in the case of enlargement, the ENP would seem to reveal the uglier face of the Union's normative power as one based on domination." Zaiotti (2007) likewise argues that ENP relations are characterized by top-down asymmetric communications and directives from the EU to the member partners. Zaiotti (2007, p. 151) argues that the EU sends contradictory messages reinforcing this asymmetry to its ENP partners:

The message to neighbours is thus: 'we appreciate your support, but we do not trust you; we want your cooperation and friendship, but we build protective fences; we share interests, but we define what these interests are; and we believe in promoting collective security, but our own security comes first'.

In the opening to its review of the implementation of the ENP in 2007, the European Commission (2008, p. 2) boasted that over the preceding few years, the ENP had enabled the EU and its partners "to make clear progress in deepening their cooperation" and was "gradually establishing itself as a mutually-beneficial partnership for reform and development...promoting regional integration beyond the borders of the Union." Two years later, in a publication entitled "Taking stock of the European Neighbourhood Policy," the European Commission (2010b, p. 2) stated boldly that the ENP had "transformed relations between the EU and its neighbours", citing in particular increases in political contacts and trade, as well as liberalisation and regulatory convergence. At the same time, the Commission noted that "much remains to be done if the ENP's goals of shared stability, security and prosperity are to be achieved." A few months earlier, Catherine Ashton, Commission Vice President and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy referred to the ENP as "a success story with many examples of concrete achievements on the ground" (European Commission - Press Release 2010a, p. 1) while simultaneously warning of continued security and economic threats in the neighbourhood.

The ENP in the MENA Region

As it extends eastward, the EU's Neighbourhood Policy is in many ways reaching out to new partners and exploring new relationships among a number of the former Soviet Republics. As it moves south across the Mediterranean, however, the EU's policy encompasses a set of familiar neighbours with whom the EU has long maintained various bilateral and multilateral relations.

The most ambitious and well-known was the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) at the November 1995 Barcelona Conference. The EMP was to be a “transformational” partnership between the then 15-member EU with 12 southern Mediterranean states (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority) encompassing political, economic and social elements. The EMP was predicated on “joint commitments to cooperative security, region-building, burden-sharing, cultural proximity, economic support and political modernization” (Kausch & Youngs 2009, p. 963).

The EU’s motivations behind the EMP were reflected in the two conflicting European narratives on the Mediterranean: 1) an inclusive narrative depicting the Mediterranean as the cradle of multiple civilizations, including European civilization, an area where common history argues for interdependence and region-building; and 2) an exclusionary narrative focusing on the multiple risks coming from the south: trafficking, migration, terrorism, etc. (Pace 2007). While the EMP boasted some tangible progress during the 1990s in terms of expanded trade and economic development, by the early 2000s, the security concerns of the post-9/11 era and the stalemate in the Middle East Peace Process had effectively curtailed any benefits accruing from the EMP to the Mediterranean partners. At the same time, it should be noted that the EU is the main trading partner for most of its neighbours in the southern Mediterranean. The direct successor to the EMP, the Union for the Mediterranean (UMed), established in July 2008, dilutes the openly political character of the EMP but also strips it of much of its substance. Kausch and Youngs (2009, p. 964) lament that the Umed, with its focus on a limited number of uncontroversial areas of cooperation is ‘little more than a ‘project of projects.’” The ENP is thus the substantive successor of the EMP. While the ENP purports to cover some of the same areas as the old EMP, the ENP has a much stronger focus on security, clearer terms of conditionality (more of an asymmetrical partnership than a cooperative agreement), and a far greater emphasis on the spreading of EU norms to the region (Pace 2007; Kausch & Youngs 2009).

As was the case with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the southern Mediterranean, and especially in the Arab states of the region, is complicated by the on-going Middle East conflict,¹ the historical and current problems of labour migration from the region to the EU, and the presence of terrorist groups in the region. More recently, the ENP in the region is being challenged by the disruptions of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ and the widespread political instability in the region (Schumacher 2011; Hollis 2012). In theory, the EU should welcome the Arab spring as fully consistent with its own promotion of democracy in the region. In practice, however, analysts note that the EU’s responses to the Arab Spring have been contradictory at times, perhaps reflecting the EU’s fear that political instability in the region leads to heightened security threats for the EU (Hollis 2012; Schumacher 2011). Formally, the EU has responded to the Arab Spring with additional financial aid to target countries, especially Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, Egypt (European Commission – Press Release 2011g, p. 1). Announced in March of 2011 and adopted in December of 2011, the EU’s “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean” is also a direct response to the Arab Spring (European Commission 2011c; European Commission – Press Release 2011f). The Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity is built on three elements: 1) democratic institution-building; 2) support to civil society; and 3) “sustainable and inclusive growth and economic development” with a special emphasis on small and medium enterprises, vocational training, health and education systems (European Commission 2011c).

¹ It should also be noted that Israel is a partner in the ENP, one which has already been designated for closer association with the EU. Israel’s status as an ENP partner, and more particularly its status as a perceived ‘favored’ partner, may be a source of conflict between the Arab members and the EU.

The ENP in Egypt

Formal relations between Egypt and the EU date from 1976 when the EC and the Arab Republic of Egypt signed a Cooperation Agreement (European Commission 2011e, p. 2). Currently, Egypt represents a major trading partner for the EU in the Mediterranean region. In 2010, EU goods exports to Egypt totalled 14.8 billion Euros and EU goods imports from Egypt reached 7.2 billion Euros. Energy (53.1%) dominated EU imports from Egypt, followed by chemicals (10.9%) and textiles (10.4%), whereas the EU exports to Egypt were comprised primarily of machinery (39%) and chemicals (10.7%) (The European Commission Directorate General for Trade 2012a). The EU is Egypt's main trading partner, accounting for roughly one-third of Egypt's trade volume and ranking first as Egypt's top import and export partner (European Commission Directorate General for Trade 2012a).

The current legal basis of EU-Egyptian relations is the EU-Egypt Association Agreement, which entered into force in June of 2004 (European Commission 2011e, p. 2). Egypt and the EU signed an Action Plan under the ENP in March of 2007. There is a strong emphasis on security in the EU/Egypt Action Plan. Based on Egypt's geo-strategic position in the region and the EU's role as a global leader, it is argued that through the Action Plan, the partners will: further develop their cooperation on regional and international issues, particularly referring to the Middle East Peace Process, disarmament and arms control, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East and elsewhere, and the fight against terrorism; to enhance and to promote dialogue between cultures and civilizations and to promote South-South trade and cooperation (European Commission 2007a, p. 2).

The Action Plan offers Egypt a number of "carrots" including increased financial support, technical assistance and "a significant degree of economic integration including a stake in the EU's Internal Market" (European Commission 2007a, p. 2). The "Priorities for Action" which appear to be rank-ordered from 'highest to lowest', place a strong emphasis on security and democracy. Specific mention is made of Egypt's role in a prospective settlement of the Middle-East conflict and of the need to "enhance dialogue on security issues such as disarmament and arms control" as well as enhancing the "effectiveness of institutions entrusted with strengthening democracy" (European Commission 2007a, p. 3). There is also a call to fight against organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, and trafficking in human beings. The Action Plan also calls on Egypt to address human rights issues, including the rights of women and children and those of workers. The Action Plan also demands that Egypt "ensure the possibility of legal recourse against death sentences" and "engage in a dialogue on the death penalty" (European Commission 2007a, p. 7). There are also, of course, numerous economic aspects of the Action Plan, including plans for economic reform and liberalisation, the establishment and strengthening of financial infrastructure, and a broad range of cooperation agreements in the fields of science, technology, transportation, and energy.

In 2008, Egypt responded to one of the carrots offered through the ENP by expressing its interest in enhancing relations with the EU and in April of 2009 the EU Association Council indicated its political commitment to "work in this direction" although no specific steps have been taken to date (European Commission 2011e, p. 2). The ENP Country Progress Report for Egypt for the year 2009 noted that "overall progress on the implementation of the Action Plan in 2009 can be summarised as 'encouraging', with a strong commitment to social, economic and sector reforms, and to a lesser extent to political reform" (European Commission - Press Release 2010a). The report expressed concerns about the pace of reform in the field of democratisation and human rights. The ENP Country Progress Report for Egypt for the year 2010, while taking into account the prevailing regional and domestic political turmoil, offered fewer words of encouragement. The Progress Report (European Commission 2011e, p. 3) noted that "on the whole, Egypt's progress in the implementation of the Action Plan was concentrated in the areas of trade and economic reform.

There was no progress on political and social reforms.” The Progress Report noted numerous deficiencies and lack of progress in the areas of human rights, legal reform, and liberalisation of services, intellectual property and border management. Progress was noted in the areas of education, the fight against drugs, and in various trade-related areas.

Notwithstanding its strong position on advancing democracy in the region, the EU hesitated to back the anti-Mubarak rebel forces in Egypt. Schumacher (2011, p. 115) observed that France led a group of southern European countries (who were joined by EU President Van Rompuy and HR Catherine Ashton) in characterizing Mubarak as a “bulwark against Islamic extremism” and encouraging a democratic transition that included Mubarak remaining in a leadership position. The EU continued to issue rather weak demands for an end to violence without any calls made for Mubarak’s resignation up until a week prior to his resignation. In December of 2011, the EU defended its stance in Egypt vis-à-vis the Arab Spring, noting that “since the beginning of the crisis, the EU has defended the rights of the Egyptians to demonstrate peacefully, and condemned the use of force by the authorities” (European Commission – Press Release 2011g, p. 2).

When it announced the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity for the region in early August 2011, the Commission did not seem to have any immediate relief plans for Egypt. After noting that there would be an immediate 17 million- Euro support package for Tunisia, the Commission noted that in terms of Egypt, “it would be premature to announce a support package until the authorities are ready to make a request for assistance and define priority needs” (European Commission 2011c, p. 4). A couple of weeks later, the Commission approved 100 million-Euro assistance to Egypt to support improved living conditions and the creation of jobs (European Commission 2011e). In its December 2011 Press Release on the “EU’s responses to the Arab Spring”, the Commission (European Commission 2011g, p. 2) noted other steps taken for Egypt in the aftermath of Mubarak’s departure, including an offer of electoral observation missions (declined), a 20 million Euro civil society package, a 2 million Euro grant under the Instrument for Stability to provide support to civil society organisations, and development aid amounting to 132 million Euros for 2011-13.

In December 2011, the Council welcomed the peaceful start of parliamentary elections while at the same time expressing its deep concern about the violence and unrest which took place prior to the elections, and calling for a swift move to civilian rule and the protection of democratic rights (Council of the European Union 2011a). At about the same time, the EU announced that it was opening new trade negotiations with Egypt (as well as Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) with the aim of deepening and broadening the free trade area (European Commission – Press Release, 14 December 2011). In February 2012, HR Catherine Ashton issued a statement condemning the Egyptian crackdown on civil society (European Union 2012b).

ENP in Tunisia

EU-Tunisian relations date back to 1969, when a commercial cooperation agreement was signed between Tunisia and the then EEC. In 1976, Tunisia concluded a new bilateral agreement with the EU under the Global Mediterranean Policy; this agreement included financial aid as well as trade provisions. In 1995 Tunisia became the first country to sign an Association Agreement with the EU as part of the then new Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (European Commission 2011c). This Association Agreement still forms the legal basis of the relationship between Tunisia and the EU (Powel 2009). Tunisia is heavily dependent upon the EU for trade. In 2008, the EU accounted for 64.5% of Tunisian imports and 72.11% of Tunisian exports (European Commission Directorate-General for Trade 2012e). Tunisia’s main exports are manufactured products (75.6% -- mainly clothing and machinery), energy (16.4%) and agricultural products (5.4%), while its main

EU imports are machinery and transport equipment (38%), textiles (13%) and chemicals (9.95%). In addition to being its leading trade partner, the EU is the largest foreign investor in the country.

Tunisia signed its Action Plan under the ENP in July of 2005, specifying an effective time period of five years. In marked contrast to the Egyptian/EU Action Plan, there is only a secondary emphasis on security issues, and these are mainly related to cooperation in the fight against terrorism and on the control of migration flows (European Commission 2005c). Consistent with the Egyptian Action Plan, a top priority is “the pursuit and consolidation of reforms which guarantee democracy and the rule of law” (European Commission 2005c, p. 3). In general, the overall tone of the EU/Tunisian Action Plan is friendlier and more presumptive of cooperation. There is also a direct call for harmonisation of labour and social policies with “the gradual approximation of Tunisian legislation to EU rules and regulations” (European Commission 2005c, p. 3). As Tunisia had already significantly liberalised its trade regime by the time the Action Plan was signed, the economic and financial priorities focus on further facilitating trade and on integration and liberalisation throughout the Maghreb region.

In its 2007 country strategy paper for Tunisia, the Commission expressed considerable optimism about Tunisia’s performance in economic and social areas, noting fifteen years of solid economic growth, the emergence of a significant middle class, and a bigger role for civil society and the private sector. At the same time, the paper warned that “progress on political aspects has been slow, and for a number of them – such as freedom of expression or association – very slow” and further forecast that the slow pace of political reform may eventually exert a negative impact on Tunisia’s social and economic development (European Commission 2007c, p. 1). An independent study by the NGO Freedom House published in late 2007 also warned about Tunisia’s shallow political reforms. The Freedom House noted the impressive economic reforms and their contrast with the virtual absence of political reform, going on to argue that Tunisia provides “a striking example of the institutionalization of forms of democracy without any of the substance” (cited in Powel 2009, p. 194).

The “Arab Spring” first erupted in Tunisia. Despite the EU’s own warning about the implications of political repression, and notwithstanding the EU’s long-standing policy of promoting democratization and political reform, it was arguably slow to respond to the Tunisian crisis. According to Schumacher (2011, p. 115), the EU “displayed an image of a rather fragmented and heterogeneous spectator. While the majority of EU governments opted for a wait-and-see approach in order not to offend the Tunisian regime in the event that the uprising turned out to be unsuccessful, France even offered the Tunisian security forces material support and expertise on crowd control.” With the success of the Tunisian Revolution, the EU was quick to step in (and quick to say it had supported the uprising from the beginning). On 14 February 2011 – approximately one month after the ousting of long-time Tunisian President Ben Ali – EC HR/VP Catherine Ashton visited Tunisia. Over the next few months, Tunisia received a series of additional high-profile EU visitors, including Commission President Barroso, European Parliament President Buzek and Commissioners Fule, Malmstrom, Georgieva, Barnier and De Gucht (European Commission – Press Release 2011f). Tunisia also received more tangible support in the wake of the revolution, including an allocation of 17 million Euros for immediate and short-term support for its democratic transition (European Commission 2011c, p. 4). The EU also provided a broad range of legal assistance and humanitarian aid (including assistance with refugees arriving from Libya). The EU doubled the budget allocation for 2011 and for the 2011-2013 period, increased the budget for Tunisia from 240 million to 400 million Euros, targeting economic recovery, democratic transition and civil society in particular (European Commission – Press Release 2011f).

The EU also established a joint Tunisia-European Union Task Force to “better understand and identify the challenges and needs of Tunisia in its democratic transition process” and to

coordinate support from the international community (European Commission 2011j). The first meeting of the Task Force took place on 28-29 September 2011 in Tunis. Among the key deliverables from the first meeting of the Task Force was the decision to begin formal negotiations between Tunisia and the EU to establish a "Privileged Partnership" (Advanced Status), the establishment of an asset recovery support team, a one-billion euro support programme funded by the international community aimed at re-launching the Tunisian economy, an EU contribution of 100 million Euros in grants; a pledge from the EIB to boost lending in Tunisia by 60%; a 60 million euro job creation project; a 22 million euro civil society initiative; increased funding for students and universities; and a pledge for a second meeting of the Task Force to take place in the first half of 2012 (European Commission – Press Release 2011d). In February 2012, Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali, head of Tunisia's transitional government, met with EC President Barroso. After his meeting, Jebali said that the current level of financial aid from the EU was "not sufficient" and urged Barroso and other EU leaders to do more to spur Tunisian economic growth and address social problems caused by widespread youth unemployment (EIU Viewswire, 2012).

The ENP in Lebanon

EU-Lebanese relations have their origins in 1977 and the signing of a Cooperation Agreement. Current EU-Lebanon relations are governed by an EU-Lebanon Association Agreement which entered into force in 2006. Lebanon has a largely service-based economy (services account for 78.2% of GDP). The EU is Lebanon's most important trading partner, accounting for 33% of Lebanon's total trade volume in 2010 (European Commission Directorate-General for Trade 2012c).

Lebanon represents something of a special case both in relation to other Arab states of the Middle East and in relation to the EU. Lebanon's political system, a form of 'consociational' democracy, is much less autocratic than most other Arab states (Seeberg 2009, p. 82). At the same time, there are many aspects of Lebanon's political system which are at odds with EU norms of democracy, including the prominent role of political elites, and the important role of Hezbollah as both a leading political institution and actor, and as a social institution (Seeberg 2009, p. 83). Adding to this complexity is the fact that following the Hezbollah-Israeli war of 2006, Lebanon's political system has periodically teetered on the brink of anarchy after having achieved some measure of post-war stability in the early 2000s. Lebanon's historical status as a Syrian client-state further complicates both its capacity for meaningful domestic reform and its external relations. Lebanon is also an exception based on its relative (compared with other countries in the region) social openness – its freedom of the press, its tolerance of individual rights and differences, etc., even in the face of ongoing multiple conflicts. Finally, still recovering from its 2005 uprising which saw the overthrow of one government, Lebanon has thus far been relatively immune to the effects of the Arab Spring. As Seeberg (2009) notes, these and other complicating factors in Lebanon (including its complex ethno-religious social structure) have sometimes led the EU to take a more pragmatic than principled approach to EU-Lebanon relations.

The EU-Lebanon ENP Action Plan was approved in January of 2007. One of the most striking characteristics of the Plan, when compared to other ENP Action Plans, is the extent to which the Plan is a nakedly political document. In the introduction to the Plan, it is stated that the Plan "is a political document, laying out the strategic objectives of cooperation between Lebanon and the EU" (European Commission 2007b, p. 1). It is further noted in the introduction to the plan that "the level of ambition of the EU-Lebanon relationship will depend on the degree of Lebanon's commitment to common values as well as its capacity to implement jointly agreed priorities, in compliance with international and European norms and principles." The Plan is also based around Lebanon's own 'national agenda' reform plan approved by the Lebanese Parliament in September of 2005. Another important caveat of the Action Plan is that it is to be taken forward within the

context of a common EU-Lebanon commitment to achieve “a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, acknowledging the important objective of restoring Lebanon’s full sovereignty and territorial integrity...[and] in the context that a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue in Lebanon will be found” (European Commission 2007b, 2). The EU-Lebanon Action Plan is thus unique in the degree of conditionality and exception it places on the execution of the plan.

Priorities specified in the Action Plan include enhancing political dialogue and cooperation, establishing a comprehensive human rights strategy, continuing to develop an independent and impartial judiciary, further promoting equal treatment of women; further developing freedom of the media, enlivening Lebanon’s export potential, progressive liberalisation of trade in services, and improved cooperation on the management of migratory flows. The most recent progress report on the implementation of the ENP in Lebanon (covering the year 2010) presents a mixed view. On the one hand, Lebanon’s economic and financial performance (GDP growth of 8%) is praised as remarkable, especially in the face of global recession. On the other hand, severe disruption in the political arena (related to the investigation of the killing of former Prime Minister Hariri and 22 other people) hindered advancement of the reform agenda and progress on the political objectives of the Action Plan. Despite the political turmoil, some progress was noted in the area of asylum and protection of Palestinian refugees, the struggle with and prevention of terrorism, the fight against drug trafficking, the fight against money laundering, and in steps made toward improving environmental sustainability (European Commission 2011g). In keeping with Lebanon’s low profile in the Arab Spring, the EU did not provide any special response to Lebanon with respect to these uprisings. Lebanon is, of course, included in the funding and programmes within the “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” (European Commission 2011c).

The ENP in Jordan

Contractual relations between the EU and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan date from the Cooperation Agreement of 1977. The EU-Jordan Association Agreement, forming the legal basis of relations between the two entities, came into force in 2002. In contrast to the more limited scope of some other Association Agreements within the region, the EU-Jordan Association Agreement aims directly at fostering political dialogue, progressive liberalisation of trade, and the promotion of cooperation across a wide spectrum of areas. Although the EU was for many years Jordan’s leading trade partner and primary source of imports, Saudi Arabia took over this leading role in 2008, leaving the EU as Jordan’s second most important trading partner (European Commission Directorate-General for Trade 2012b). The EU plays a relatively minor role (EU share of FDI inflow into Jordan was as low as 5% during the period 2003 to 2007).

The EU-Jordan ENP Action Plan was signed on June 2, 2005 with a planned duration of three to five years. The language and tone of the Action Plan is considerably more symmetrical than that found in other regional Action Plans. There is talk of “partnership” and joint relations: The European Union and Jordan are determined to make use of this occasion to enhance their relations and to promote stability, security and well-being. The approach is founded on partnership, joint ownership and differentiation. It will contribute to the further development of our strategic partnership (European Commission 2005a, p. 1).

As was the case with Lebanon, the Jordan Action Plan is structured as an EU response to Jordan’s own political reform agenda, which also incorporated a fairly comprehensive National Social and Economic Action Plan. Top priorities include fostering a national dialogue on democracy, continuing to develop an independent and impartial judiciary, further developing freedom of the press, continuing the promotion of equal treatment of women, strengthening political dialogue and cooperation on both international and regional issues (including the Middle East Peace Process and the fight on terrorism), and engineering measures to improve business

conditions, progressive liberalisation of trade in services, as well as provide more effective management of migratory flows (European Commission 2005a, p. 3).

The most recent progress report on the implementation of the Jordanian Action Plan (for the year 2010) was remarkably positive. Jordan was congratulated for its progress in the areas of democracy and the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, employment policy, education, trade-related issues and other areas. Deficiencies or lack of progress was noted in the areas of competition, intellectual property rights, accounting and auditing, and Jordan's accession to some important international conventions (European Commission 2011f). Overall, however, a ringing endorsement of Jordan's progress was political agreement announced in October 2010 on the "advanced status" partnership between the EU and Jordan, making Jordan the second ENP partner country (after Morocco) to achieve "advanced status" (European Commission 2011f, p. 2). Also in October of 2010, Jordan became the first ENP partner country to have concluded negotiations for a new ENP Action Plan. The five-year plan has not yet been ratified. While Lebanon did not receive any special funding or assistance related to the Arab Spring, Jordan was provided with additional assistance (in excess of 40 million euro), based on its "advanced status" partnership (European Commission – Press Release 2011g). This is consistent with the EU's "more for more" strategy, wherein it provides partners with more benefits in response to the partner's 'meeting of conditions'.

ENP in the Palestinian Authority

Contractual relations between the European Community and the Palestinian Authority date from 1997, when the EC and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed an Interim Association Agreement on trade and cooperation. The trade portion of the Agreement has never been fully implemented "due to obstacles raised by Israel, which considers it incompatible with the economic provisions of the Oslo Agreements" (European Commission 2011h, p. 2). Not surprisingly, due to multiple restrictions on trade and access, as well as a difficult economic situation, trade with the EU is very limited, with total EU imports and exports valued at just 59 million euro (versus billions for the other Mediterranean ENP partners) in 2009 (Directorate-General for Trade 2012d). Problematic relations with Israel and the Palestinian aspects of the Middle East conflict significantly hamper efforts at economic integration between the Palestinian Authority and its neighbouring states as well as the EU.

An ENP Action Plan between the EU and the Palestinian Authority was approved in May of 2005 for three to five years (its legal basis was the Interim Association Agreement). The Action Plan notes in the preface that Palestinian participation in the ENP faces numerous constraints and limitations resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (European Commission 2005b). As with a number of other regional Action Plans, the EU-Palestinian Action Plan reflects the Palestinian Authority's own political and economic reform agenda (in particular the latest reform programme launched in June 2002), as well as the EU vision. Given the constraints on action, this Action Plan makes no distinction between short and medium-term actions. Compared with other Action Plans, a much more limited number of priorities are noted. At the top of the list is "facilitating efforts to resolve the Middle East conflict, and alleviating the humanitarian situation". Other priorities include improving the dialogue between cultures and religions, fighting racism and xenophobia (in particular anti-Semitism and Islamophobia), strengthening administrative capacity, progress on establishing a functioning judiciary, and building on progress in establishing an accountable system of public finance.

The most recent (for the year 2010) Progress Report on implementation of the Action Plan is quite favourable, especially given the difficult circumstances. The report noted that "the reformist agenda of the government is producing good results... progress in many areas (governance, public

finance management) was achieved in a context of occupation...there has also been some progress on the rule of law" (European Commission 2011h, p. 2). On the other hand, the report noted concern over human rights violations and the "grim" economic situation in Gaza. The EU and its Member States are the biggest donors to UNRWA, the UN agency providing support to refugee Palestinian populations (European Commission - Press Release 2011h; European Commission - Press Release 2012). The EU is likely to continue pursuing its ENP agreement with the Palestinian Authority regardless of the obstacles it encounters (or Palestine encounters in implementing Action Plans), as this relationship is essential to the EU's role and status as an actor in the Middle East Peace Process and the fact that the success of this relationship being closely linked with its dealings with other ENP Mediterranean partners as well as its position vis a vis the overall stability of the region.

Conclusion

Launched in 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a foreign policy directed at sixteen geographically proximate states to the EU's newly expanded borders. While the ENP can function as a force for good among the member partners, it is a policy born of EU self-interest. Specifically, security interests are at the heart of the ENP. By directing its Neighbourhood Policy at its non-EU neighbours, the EU hopes to export EU norms, rules and values as well as spur economic growth with the overall objective of achieving regional economic and political stability, thereby better ensuring the security of the EU and its members. In this sense, the ENP is meant to achieve some of the same objectives as enlargement, only without having to actually admit new members to the Union.

In the southern Mediterranean, the ENP has now largely supplanted Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Agreements. This review of ENP in five Middle Eastern/North African countries has shown that the EU's relationship with its ENP partners tends to be top-down and asymmetrical in nature. Nevertheless, this review also shows that the ENP - at least as far as it has been implemented among the countries studied - is a highly differentiated policy, based on the needs, characteristics and political/economic context of the partner, as the different approaches to Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority demonstrate. While there are key similarities across approaches to countries and the nature of action plans (notably the focus on democratisation, human rights, trade liberalisation, rule of law, etc.), the EU has been flexible both in the design and enforcement of the Action Plans. At the same time, the EU has been true to its pledge to provide "more for more" - that is to allow more benefits to those partners who most closely comply with conditions, as Jordan's achievement of "special status" demonstrates. Nevertheless, considering the situation as a whole, the relationship of the ENP agreements remains asymmetrical, with the EU as the superior, dominant partner closely focused on its own interests. That the ENP is first and foremost concerned with the security of the EU and its member states is illustrated by the EU's tepid and tardy responses to the political movements of the Arab Spring - movements which while aligned with the EU's pro-democracy stance, threatened to serve as a destabilizing force in the region.

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